



The AH & SF meets with members of the San Nicolas Business Association

The Promenade Restaurant in San Nicolas was the place for a congenial conference between board members of the Aruba Hospitality and Security Foundation and members of the board of the San Nicolas Business Association. Rob Smith, General Manager of the Wyndham Resort Spa & Casino and President of the AH & SF board was accompanied by Jan van Ness, General Manager of the Playa Linda Resort and Treasurer of the Foundation that inspired the Visibility Teams. Joining them for a discussion of the Foundations work from the SNBA were Hubert RedHead, President, Endora Peters, and Any Hernandez, Treasurer.

The purpose of this meeting was to encourage the SNBA to participate with the AH & SF in support of the work done by Aruba's Visibility Teams. These teams, a partnership of the private and public sector of Aruba, consist of police and private security that patrol both the Palm Beach and Eagle Beach areas, Oranjestad, the most heavily tourist populated areas, and since March of this year, a team was established in San Nicolas and another in Santa Cruz. The teams have been doing a fine job of controlling "nuisance crime" such as petty theft, which can plague tourists in any destination, and which Aruba wishes to see eradicated.

Present for the meeting representing Aruba's Police Department were also Ronny Bernadina, the Chief Commissioner of Police, Rolando Peters, liaison between the police and the AH & SF and a member of the board, and Inspector Trudy Hassel, the recently appointed coordinator for all the teams of the AH & SF. Hosting the meeting was AH & SF board member Dave Smith of Valero Refinery, which is a substantial supporter of the work of the Foundation.

The subject under discussion was the many accomplishments of the Foundation and the phenomenal success of the teams plus the possibility of more involvement and support from the business of San Nicolas. Jan van Ness made an enlightening presentation of the growth and financial management of the Foundation, which in three short years went from one team to five and managed to accomplish all their goals for 2005 under budget. The Foundation established two new Visibility Teams, ran awareness workshops for hotel employees, and established surveillance for the "lost zones" of the Natural Bridge, Tierra del Sol Golf Course, and the Baby Beach and Arashi areas. In addition, they shifted funds from staff support to material support, acquiring more equipment, including a boat for waterfront patrols and response, and achieved all this for only 90% of their budget.

The Visibility Teams of Aruba are unique in all the Caribbean. No other island has this cooperative of the Public and Private sectors that mutually support a security effort in both financing and manpower. As Jan van Ness related, certain areas that are supported by contributions have a surplus of funds, and these help support the work in other areas that have a deficit. At this time, San Nicolas has a surplus because of the generous assistance of the Valero Refinery, but it was the aim of the AH & SF board member to acquaint the SNBA with the valuable contribution to the community the Visibility Team is making around the island and in their area. This is an integral part of the revitalization of the San Nicolas Area and its environs, a goal of the SNBA. It is also the hope of the AH & SF board members that the local businesses of the area will get involved with the foundation's work and shoulder some of the responsibility in the support of the teams even in just the smallest way. Jan van Ness expressed that the AH & SF is a "very transparent" organization, and handed Hubert Readhead a financial statement for him to convey to his association members for consideration.

He explained that at the moment the AH & SF is at "zero budget" but they do have plans for expansion, particularly of the force in San Nicolas, which would provide an "after hours" Visibility Team, and the participation of the SNBA members would be of great assistance.

A film narrated by Inspector Trudy Hassel further elaborated on the achievements and goals of the Foundation and Visibility Teams. This film will be shown to all the businesses around Aruba to encourage a unity and participation by all interested parties. Jan van Ness revealed that the AH & SF will launch an informative website this year, which will be linked to www.Aruba.com.

The luncheon meeting ended with Ray Buckley, General Manager of Valero Refinery Aruba handing over a substantial donation to foundation president Rob Smith. Valero has been a staunch supporter of the foundation since they took over the refinery and Roland Peterson described Valero as "a very good neighbor to Aruba, indeed."

